

wherein the acoustic gasket is bonded to and coextensive with the at least one adhesive support system so as to not impede independent movement of the membrane in the unbonded region.

24. (Amended) [The sound-transmissive cover assembly of claim 12] A sound-transmissive protective cover assembly, consisting essentially of:

(a) at least one microporous membrane having an inner unbonded region and a periphery bonded region; and

(b) a plurality of adhesive support systems,

said at least one membrane being bonded around its periphery to said plurality of adhesive support systems such that at least a portion of said inner unbonded region of the membrane is exposed to the atmosphere and free to move in response to acoustic energy, said assembly having an instantaneous water entry pressure of at least one meter water column and an overall acoustic transmission loss of no more than 3 dB in the range of frequencies from 300 to 3000 Hz, wherein said microporous membrane is supported by said adhesive support systems in a captive construction.

26. (three times amended) A method of using a microporous membrane as a sound-transmissive acoustic protective cover for an electronic device having a transducer, comprising:

providing an assembly consisting essentially of a microporous membrane having first and second surfaces and a perimeter defined by its edges, at least one of said surfaces bonded to at least one adhesive support system to form a periphery bonded region surrounding an inner unbonded region of the microporous membrane [having an inner unbonded region and a periphery bonded region, said membrane being bonded around its periphery to at least one adhesive support system] such that [at least a portion of] said first and second surfaces of the inner unbonded region of said membrane [is] are exposed to the atmosphere and free to move in response to acoustic energy; and

orienting said supported microporous membrane so as to cover the transducer in the electronic device, thereby forming a sound-transmissive acoustic protective cover;

whereby the cover has an instantaneous water entry pressure of at least one meter water column and an overall acoustic transmission loss of no more than 3 dB in the range of frequencies from 300 to 3000 Hz.

28. (Amended) The sound-transmissive cover assembly of claim [1] 6, wherein said adhesive support system further comprises at least one

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supplemental bonding site extending across a portion of said inner unbonded region.

REMARKS

Claims 7 and 13-23 stand withdrawn from consideration, claims 1-5, 8-12, 26-33 and 34-36 stand rejected and claims 6 and 24-25 stand objected to. Claims 1-3 and 7-23 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter contained therein, and claims 4-6, 24, 26 and 28 have been amended.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the following remarks.

I. The Claims are Not Anticipated by the Prior Art

Claims 1-4, 9, 11-12, 26, 29, 30-33, and 35-36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Repolle et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,828,012).

With respect to claims 1-3, 9 and 11-12, applicants submit that the cancellation of these claims without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter contained therein renders moot this rejection.

With respect to claim 4, applicants submit that claim 4 has been amended to depend from allowable claim 6 which has been rewritten in independent form, and such combination would not be rendered obvious by the cited art.

With respect to claim 26 and claims 29-33 and 35-36, applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. Specifically, applicants submit that method claim 26, as presently amended, and claim 29 recite a construction wherein the assembly consists essentially of

a microporous membrane having first and second surfaces and a perimeter defined by its edges, at least one of said surfaces bonded to at least one adhesive support system to form a periphery bonded region surrounding an inner unbonded region of the microporous membrane, such that said first and second surfaces of the inner unbonded region of said membrane are exposed to the atmosphere and free to move in response to acoustic energy....

As noted in applicants' previous submission dated March 18, 2002, the present invention is a sound-transmissive protective cover assembly which constitutes an improvement over the teachings of the Repolle et al. patent. The improvement is that, rather than having an assembly as in Repolle et al. where a porous support layer covers an entire surface of the protective membrane including the unbonded region, in the claimed invention the first and second sides of the

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